



Kentucky Department of Corrections

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Katherine Williams
502-758-5816
Katherine.Williams@ky.gov

Department of Corrections Reorganizes the Division of Substance Abuse

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 3, 2018) – The Kentucky Department of Corrections (DOC) recently implemented several changes to its Division of Substance Abuse. Due to the continued growth of Kentucky’s felon population with substance abuse issues, the division has expanded and reorganized to better meet the needs of offenders.

“The demand for treatment for substance abuse disorders continues to increase among the criminal justice population,” said Interim Commissioner Jim Erwin. “In an effort to keep pace with this demand, the Department of Corrections has completed a reorganization which creates both clinical and administrative leadership for seven geographical areas of the state. Our staff is made up of seasoned professionals who are a testimony to the hard work and high standards required for these new positions.”

Branch manager positions were created to better define supervisory roles and to more accurately reflect the actual job duties of staff. The positions coincide with similar positions in other divisions and departments. There are seven branch manager positions, with each having clinical and administrative oversight for a specified geographic area. Within those areas there could be a prison, jail, halfway house, Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP), or Recovery Kentucky Center. The individuals in these new positions include Kathy Taylor, Veronica Hunt, Mylea McFelea, Jeannie Walldridge, Vonda Napier, Jay Volkert and Hillery Ohnemus.

Kathy Taylor began her career in corrections as a correctional officer at Kentucky State Reformatory in 1990. She was promoted to a classification and treatment officer at Frankfort Career Development Center in 1991. In 1996, Taylor was promoted to the position of offender rehabilitation specialist in what is now the Division of Substance Abuse. She was one of the first hired into this position and was tasked with the development of a community-based substance abuse program in Districts 12, 4 and 9. In 1999, Taylor was promoted to program administrator, which entailed oversight of the community-based social service clinicians and Recovery Kentucky Centers. She now assists with oversight of the prison and jail programs. Taylor received her bachelor’s degree from Kentucky Wesleyan College in criminal justice and psychology and her master’s degree from Eastern Kentucky University in criminal justice.

Veronica Hunt began her career in corrections at Marion Adjustment Center as a correctional officer in January 1995. She was promoted to a classification and treatment officer in July 1995, addictions treatment counselor in 1998 and an addiction treatment manager in 2004. In 2009 she was promoted to a program administrator with the

Department of Corrections Division of Substance Abuse. Hunt has been responsible for the clinical supervision of jails, prisons and a Recovery Kentucky Center that offered substance abuse treatment. She also has clinically supervised social service clinicians in the probation and parole office and collaborated with pretrial officers and judges across the state with the pretrial substance abuse program. Hunt received her bachelor's degree in corrections and juvenile services from Eastern Kentucky University. She earned her master's degree in social sciences from Campbellsville University. Hunt has been a certified alcohol and drug counselor since 2005 and a licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselor since 2016.

Mylea McFelea began her career with the Department of Corrections as a social service clinician in 2002. She promoted to a program administrator in 2005, a position to include statewide responsibilities in 2008. She was instrumental in the development and implementation of many of the substance abuse programs for the department, as well as the department's initiative to license all of its substance abuse programs in adult institutions. Prior to joining the DOC, McFelea worked as a classification and treatment officer and then as a substance abuse counselor at Marion Adjustment Center. McFelea received her bachelor's degree from Campbellsville University and in 2002 became a certified alcohol and drug counselor.

Jeannie Waldrige began her career in corrections in 2004 as a social service clinician within the District 19 Probation and Parole office. She was promoted to program administrator in 2008 in the Division of Substance Abuse, initially supervising substance abuse treatment programs in county jails across the state and then regionally supervising various levels of treatment in jails, prisons and the community. Prior to working in corrections, Waldrige worked in the Department of Community Based Services, Jefferson County Drug Court Program and non-profit agencies working with youthful offenders and homeless young adults in transitional programs focused on drug, alcohol and violence prevention. Waldrige is a certified alcohol and drug counselor, as well as a board approved clinical supervisor for substance abuse counselors working toward their certification. Waldrige received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Kentucky State University in 1995.

Vonda Napier began her career with the department as a social service clinician for the Division of Substance Abuse in 2007. In 2014, Napier promoted to a program administrator, providing clinical guidance to the social service clinicians in the department and to staff of the contracted substance abuse programs in the eastern part of the state. Napier is responsible for ensuring that the programs offered to inmates maintain standards set forth by the Office of Inspector General for licensed treatment providers. Prior to joining the DOC, Napier worked as a substance abuse counselor for Kentucky River Community Care and for the Cabinet of Health and Family Services as a social service clinician. Napier is a graduate of Eastern Kentucky University where she earned her bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in child and family development. She is also a 2006 graduate of Lindsey Wilson School of Professional Counseling where she obtained a master's degree in mental health and community counseling. Napier is a certified alcohol and drug counselor, a licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselor and a licensed professional clinical counselor.

Jay Volkert began his career in corrections in 2007 as a correctional officer at Marion Adjustment Center. While there he was promoted to an addictions treatment counselor in 2009 and a substance abuse counselor in 2012. Later that year he was promoted to assistant director of the substance abuse programs. In 2013 he became a program administrator with the DOC Division of Substance Abuse at Northpoint Training Center. Volkert earned his bachelor's degree in science from Murray State University in 2006 and became a certified alcohol and drug counselor in 2016.

Hillery Ohnemus began her career in corrections as a social service clinician at Western Kentucky Correctional Complex in 2011. She promoted to the position of program administrator for District 1 in 2014, providing oversight for the jail, prison and community substance abuse treatment programs. Previously Ohnemus had worked at Four Rivers Behavioral Health as an assessment specialist. Ohnemus received her bachelor's degree in education in 2007 and master's degree in counseling in 2011 from Murray State University.